

Mario Modiano Having Dinner With His Parents And His Wife



This photograph was taken at a dinner with my parents, Sam and Nella Modiano (on the left), and my wife Inci (next to my father) in Athens. I don't remember who the others were, probably friends of my parents. The photo was taken after 1962. I would say sometime between 1965 and 1968. My wife was a Muslim Turk and very liberal-minded. So was her family who accepted me instantly. The question of religion never came up. We had a civil wedding in Istanbul. Then we came to Athens and, since the civil marriage was not yet recognized in Greece, we looked for a hakham to marry us without too much fuss. We looked all over - Turkey, London, Paris, Rome - but they were very strict and wanted to go by the rules. Then thankfully we found a kind hakham in Athens who said to Inci, 'If you respect his faith as he respects yours, it is fine with me.' So he did. We were married in my bachelor apartment on Alopekis Street. Inci went through a fictitious conversion and she got the name of Lea. In this way we managed to register our religious wedding in the Athens registry. She would come to the synagogue whenever I went, which was rarely. I find that the non-Jewish wives of all my relatives and cousins also go to the synagogue and attend services. Quite naturally they expect their husbands to go to the church with them whenever they go. With Inci I only went once to a Muslim funeral in Istanbul, of a cousin of hers. I just happened to be in Istanbul for work, and they were holding this, and I was present. I mean she didn't put pressure on me. We had exactly the same attitude that we communicate with the almighty through our own prayers and not through ceremonies.